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06-19

January 24, 2006

For Immediate Release:

PUBLIC INVITED TO VIEW ORION NEBULA FROM EIU OBSERVATORY

CHARLESTON – The public is invited to view the Orion Nebula from Eastern Illinois University's physics observatory, starting at 9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 27, weather permitting.

Even if it's too cloudy to view the star-making region, the observatory will be open for tours, said Jim Conwell, EIU physics professor.

The Orion Nebula has been cause for celebration at EIU this month, as the university became one of 72 institutions in the world to receive a copy of a new Hubble Space Telescope photograph featuring never-before-seen features of the nebula.

EIU's copy of the poster is displayed in the Physical Science Building with photographs taken from EIU's observatory, including a time-lapse picture of the Orion Nebula at almost the same scale as the Hubble image.

The monthly public viewings held at the observatory played a direct role in allowing the university to secure the image, as the posters were released to institutions providing outreach education.

The observatory houses a state-of-the-art, computer-controlled, 16-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope. A dome can open and rotate to provide views of all parts of the sky.

The building is located in the southwestern corner of campus between O'Brien Stadium and the intramural softball fields.

Those who attend may park their vehicles in the lot north of Wesley United Methodist Church and then walk to the observatory site.

For more information, call the physics department at 581-3220.